

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

WINDY HILL GARDENS

"Peyton's Peerless Peonies"

RAPIDAN, - - - VIRGINIA

SINGLE PEONIES

For decorative effect in our gardens no flower can surpass the single peonies, the Japanese alone being their rivals. With mature plants laden with from twenty to fifty glorious flowers, six to ten inches in diameter with great guard petals of immaculate white, blushing modestly, glowing pink and dazzling red, all set off with their centers of gold, our gardens carry a beauty and distinction no other flowers can lend.

Single peonies have from one to three rows of broad guard petals and a center of pollen bearing stamens golden yellow in color. An added note of charm is found in the carpels of some shade of green tipped with the same or a different color from the guard petals.

There are somewhere between five hundred and a thousand named varieties of single peonies, of which probably at least seventy-five per cent should never have been named, as they are so similar to other varieties that no one can tell them apart. The varieties mentioned in the following remarks are probably the best known and most distinctive of this multitude.

Of the whites I always think of Shaylor's Le Jour as the best and most beautiful. It is a plant of good habit, medium height, with great rounded petals of purest white, which always remind me of our wild hibiscus, but of course lacking the purple center. Kelway's Queen of the Belgians has been heralded as the best, but I have yet to be convinced. Albiflora, The Bride, known also as La Fiancee, is the old standby. It might have better stems. White Japan, Whitley Major, and several others are very similar. Marjorie Allison is very beautiful with two rows of guard petals. Pure Love is especially fine. Brand's Edith West is a white of value. His new Krinkled White, blooms pale pink, but fades at once to white and, as it is upright, tall, late and floriferous, it can well take its place with Le Jour as one of the two best whites. White Swan is very large and especially desirable for its lateness. Opening pale pink, but fading almost immediately to pure white is Shirley Walker. A large plant of this with its immense blooms of the best quality is a sight not easily forgotten. A little lower in growth, a little darker in color Catherine Parry is just as beautiful. Old but fine is Barr's Rosy Dawn, which blooms with the rosy flush of dawn on its pure white petals which vanishes with the sun. Pride of Langport splendid in flower, color and carriage is generally conceded to be as fine a pink as can be found, yet English Elegance will cause Pride to have a fall or at least a step down. Thurlow's Helen, of a different pink, is the earliest, sturdiest and largest of any. Van Leeuwen's Mr. Thim is claiming to be its superior in size, but so far it has not proved its claim. It is a sturdy and spectacular flower. Pink Delight is one of the coming light pinks. Mademoiselle Louise Delattre, light pink fading white, and Mrs. Helen Rooker, darker in tone, are two that are outstanding. Sagoromo, a light pink, and Katori Nahiko, a very dark one, are flowers we all wish to have. Probably L'Etincelante is the dark pink that is generally considered the best. It is spectacular in its silvery bordered glowing pink, borne stiffly upright on tall, strong stems. Rabelais is a Dessert-Doriat flower that is of excellent color and carriage. Jeanne Ernould, rather dark at first but rapidly fading much lighter, is one of the best recently sent out. Nellie, quite light pink with small center, is noteworthy. Albiflora carnea is beautiful and dis-

tinguished because it is said to be a wild form. Brand's Harriet Onley is a rival for dark pink honors. Kelway's Wild Rose is unique in its robe of white heavily spotted rose. Very late with carriage of the best and beauty unchallenged Auten's Mischief ends the season with its flowers of soft pink.

For spectacular effects the reds have no equal. The Moor is probably the best known. It is tall and dark and well adapted to be a leader. Gloriously glowing and radiantly red there are two peonies growing in my garden which I have come to look upon as the perfect reds. The earlier of the two, lower in growth, but just as large, is the foreigner, Verdun. The second is well named for President Lincoln. Tall and graceful with remarkable color it stands out among peonies as Lincoln did among the men of his time. Just as tall and barely a second is Winnebago Chief. Dwarf in growth, very early, Santorb will easily carry off the honors in its season. Leading the lates is Nihonji, very brilliant, while Black Prince, darker, and Toreador, latest of all, are no less desirable. Probably the purest red is Flanders Field. Lord Kitchener cannot be forgotten. Vera has often taken the prize as one of the best.

Austin Chamberlin, probably not to be classed as a single but as a semi-double, is beautiful and brilliant. Jappensha Ikku is a splendid flower, while ushering in the season is a very tall and brilliant flower named Minnehaha, while just behind it is a lower grower but just as brilliant which came to me under the same name. Still another of pink came with this name.

Other very desirable reds are Bloodstone, Mafeking and Mellin Knight. In pink we may add Deborah Sayles, Duchess of Bedford, Ludwig Richter, Othello (Dessert) and Venise. Whites might well include Clairette, Lady Lillian Ogle, Marguerite Dessert in her pink spotted robe, and Perle Blanche.

Likewise, there are a number of very new singles which so far are unknown to me. Of these Doriat has put out this year Charlotte Core, described as pure white, fine bud, fine bearing, big tuft yellow stamens, very early, and Comtesse de Murad, large silvery white with carmine and light purple reflex, rounded petals, fine bearing, very distinct, very early. Mr. Auten has a number of which White Perfection, broad petals, beautifully cupped, wonderful substance, medium height, good stem, fine carriage, suggests a single Isani Gidui, and Hennepin, brilliant black red, have won honorable mention. Monticello is interesting to us in the South. It is a large white, gracefully poised on tall, stiff stems. A number of his new one are reds. Mr. Franklin has also put out a number of new ones, of which Atlanta, a huge white, is single.

Adding distinction to our gardens and prolonging the peony season from four to six weeks are the very early species and their hybrids. While some are rather difficult, the following give promise of giving good results: In white and blush, Le Printemps, Mai Fleuri, Messagere, and Wittmanniana, the last being quite yellow and several having decided yellowish tinge. Mlokoewitschi is a real yellow and if enough demand should develop would surely be offered more extensively. Avant Garde and Russi Major are light and dark pink, respectively. Tenuifolia Simplex and Latifolia are both very early, very dwarf and very red. Later and much more robust are Laciniata and Anomala Smouthii, which seem to me to be identical. They are of medium height, good bloomers and a splendid color. They grow as well as the ordinary chinensis peony. Lobata is a very peculiar pink that is very attractive.

Finally no good garden is complete without some of these beautiful single peonies within it. When you once see them you will always be glad you have them in your garden.

GEORGE W. PEYTON.

Rapidan, Va., August 15, 1932.